Council Highlights: May 2000

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COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS is intended to provide quick updates on issues of interest to members and affiliates of the Council of Ontario Universities (COU). It is produced regularly throughout the academic year. This issue covers the months of March and April 2000.

Graduate placement survey results released at 250th meeting of Council

The results of the second annual graduate placement survey were released at the 250th meeting of the Council of Ontario Universities, held on April 27, 2000. This year's findings reinforced the findings of last year's survey – that Ontario university graduates are doing exceptionally well in today's job market. The 1999-2000 survey found that 93.14% of 1997 Ontario university graduates were employed within six months of graduation and that the employment rate climbed to 96.44% two years after graduation. On May 8, 2000, all Ontario universities will make survey results and other information about their institution available on their respective web sites. A total of 19,614 graduates participated.

The 250th meeting of Council included a reunion of many of the past Chairs of Council. Among the past Chairs was Dr. David Smith, former Principal of Queen's University and former Chair of the Advisory Panel on Future Directions for Postsecondary Education, whose reports of two COU-commissioned studies were released at the meeting (see page 5). Also reviewed was the report of the Task Force on Learning Technologies, *A Time to Sow* (see page 2).

COU presents brief to the Ontario Financial Review Commission

On April 12, 2000, COU presented a brief to the Ontario Financial Review Commission, which was reconstituted to review the plans for implementing its 1995 report and to provide advice to the Minister of Finance on how to improve the financial management, decision-making and reporting practices of the government's key transfer partners.

COU welcomed the opportunity to provide written commentary on the issue of accountability in Ontario universities. At the presentation, Dr. Ian Clark, President of COU, and Ken Snowdon, Vice-President of COU Policy and Analysis, emphasized the importance of the approach identified in the *Report of the Task Force on University Accountability* (the Broadhurst report), specifically, relying on the role of boards as the locus for accountability at the institutional level and strengthening accountability mechanisms at that level. They noted the many steps that universities had taken to implement the Task Force's recommendations. They also used the opportunity to stress the challenges facing Ontario universities including secondary school reform and the implications of the government's most recent funding announcements.

The COU brief reviewed the work of the Task Force and commented on the recent report of the Provincial Auditor. It also provided some insights from Dr. David Smith's report entitled *"How will I know if there is quality?"* that examined quality indicators.

Report on learning technologies now available

The COU Task Force on Learning Technologies, created to examine opportunities and barriers to the use of learning technologies and to make recommendations for their effective use in universities, released its findings in a report entitled *A Time to Sow*. The report identifies strategic

planning, the creation of a more supportive environment for the use of learning technologies, and significant investment from governments, the private sector and universities as crucial in addressing the potential of learning technologies within Ontario universities.

David Johnston, Chair of the Task Force and President of the University of Waterloo, noted the timeliness of the recommendations, in light of the anticipated enrolment demand, which is expected to increase by 40% over the next decade, and the pressing need to recruit faculty. "Given these pressures," says Professor Johnston, "there is a narrow window of opportunity to make decisions regarding the use and support of learning technologies to aid in the effectiveness and reputation of Ontario universities."

The Task Force was composed of representatives from government, the communications and information technology sectors, and universities.

For a copy of the report, contact (416) 979-2165 ext. 236, e-mail pub_aff@cou.on.ca or visit the COU web site (www.cou.on.ca).

Operating grants and tuition fee policy announced for 2000-2001

On March 14, 2000, Dianne Cunningham, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, announced that operating grants for universities for the academic year 2000-2001 would increase by $51.8 million to a total of $1.663 billion.

The funding will be divided as follows:

- $18.8 million is earmarked for previously announced scheduled commitments including Access to Opportunities Program and Fair Funding to universities;
- Accessibility Fund – $16.5 million in new funding, and
- Performance Indicators Fund – $16.5 million in new funding distributed on the basis of institutional performance in three indicators (graduation rate, six-month employment rate and two-year employment rate).

The Minister also announced a new tuition fee policy, from 2000-2001 to 2004-2005, that will allow universities to increase tuition fees for most programs to a level no more than 2% above the maximum average fee for the previous year. Year-over-year percentage increases may not be compounded.

COU expressed its disappointment with the announcement on operating grant allocations and the new tuition fee policy, noting in its press release: "The funding does not respond to the enrolment growth in universities in recent years nor to the need to prepare for the significant increase in demand for access that will accompany the double cohort and the echo of the baby boom. The five-year announcement on tuition reduces the flexibility that our institutions have to react to changing demands and to ensuring students receive the quality education they deserve."

Update – Budget 2000

COU welcomed the Ontario Budget, announced on May 2, 2000, that provides new investment in research, capital and student assistance. The new research initiatives will include an expansion of the Ontario Research and Development Challenge Fund, a tripling of the Ontario Innovation Trust, a doubling of the Premier's Research Excellence Awards, and a new Ontario Research Performance Fund to defray the overhead costs associated with Ontario-financed research.

Dr. Paul Davenport, Chair of COU and President of the University of Western Ontario, reacted

positively to the budget's research initiatives, saying that they "are good news for Ontario universities and reflect the priorities that universities and government identified collaboratively through the Working Group on University Research. The province is expanding some very successful programs, while recognizing the overhead costs associated with university-based research."

The budget also provided an extra $286 million to the SuperBuild program to help colleges and universities build new classrooms and labs, while upgrading existing facilities. Dr. Davenport noted, "Although the budget does not commit further operating funds for enrolment expansion and quality enhancement, universities understand that constructing new facilities constitutes a significant first step toward an overall plan for dealing with increased future enrolments."

Dr. Ian Clark, President of Council of Ontario Universities, lauded the budget's measures in aid of students and improved tax treatment of donations, including the increased number and higher value of the Ontario Graduate Scholarships, the expansion of the Ontario-Work Study Program and the new Technology Tax Incentive to help colleges and universities acquire more advanced teaching equipment and learning technologies.

OCGS-NAGS conference on graduate education well attended

The Ontario Council on Graduate Studies (OCGS) and the Northeastern Association of Graduate Schools (NAGS) co-hosted a conference, "The Future of Graduate Education," on April 13 -15, 2000. NAGS is one of the four regional affiliate organizations of the Council of Graduate Schools in Washington D.C., encompassing universities in Eastern Canada and the northeastern quarter of the United States.

The joint OCGS-NAGS conference was planned to address similarities and differences in the approaches of Canadian and U.S. institutions to major issues confronting graduate education. Each session – on topics ranging from enhancing access to graduate education for minorities and students from deprived economic backgrounds; to intellectual property, graduate studies and research; to research and professional ethics – included presentations from both Canadian and American panelists. Participants included an equal number of Canadian and American graduate deans and administrators, university faculty and graduate students, and representatives from granting councils and other organizations concerned with graduate education.

Awards were presented to students (for the outstanding master's thesis and doctoral dissertation) and faculty (for outstanding graduate teaching and graduate mentoring). Of special note, Dr. Jules LaPidus, who has served for 16 years as President of the Council of Graduate Schools and who delivered the keynote address on "Continuity and Change in Graduate Education," was honoured with an award for his support of graduate education.

At a reception sponsored by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Tina Molinari, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister, acknowledged the importance the government attaches to graduate education. She also singled out the Ontario Council on Graduate Studies for the significant role it plays, particularly, in its appraisal of the quality of our graduate programs.

Funding for collaborative nursing programs set out

On April 13, 2000, Elizabeth Witmer, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, and Dianne Cunningham, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, announced funding for the establishment of collaborative nursing programs and a change in the RN entry to practice regulation. The funding announcement was set out as follows:

- A one-time grant of $10 million for 2000-2001 flowing to the colleges that will equal approximately $3,000 per first-year student.

- Start-up/expansion grants of $12.6 million over seven years beginning 2001-2002;
- $5.6 million in college faculty upgrading grants to enable up to 170 college faculty to earn MScN degrees;
- $2.1 million to offset college faculty tuition fees for those faculty members who are working on MScN degrees; and
- $4.9 million in faculty renewal grants to expand graduate programs (in response to concerns about the anticipated retirement of nursing faculty in the near future) for up to 140 RNs who wish to become nursing educators.

The entry to practice regulation has been passed, which means individuals seeking registration as a RN will require a baccalaureate degree in nursing, effective January 1, 2005. The Council of Ontario University Programs in Nursing supports the preparation of RNs at the baccalaureate level and is studying the funding implications of the announcement.

Update on secondary school curriculum

As noted in the February 2000 edition of *Council Highlights*, the Ministry of Education intends to release in May the policy documents that detail the content of the new Grade 11 and Grade 12 courses. When that material is available, the member institutions of COU will be able to establish specific requirements for admission to the institution and to its programs. The information will be needed by January or February 2001 to enable students to choose courses that will provide entry to the university programs of their choice.

The release of the Grade 11 and 12 course material will initiate the next phase of COU's involvement with the secondary school curriculum. Some issues, notably questions related to student evaluation and the reporting of student grades, need to be discussed and clarified. COU is working with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities on a plan, modelled on the Curriculum Validation Process, intended to engage academics in the implementation and evaluation of the new courses and in a projected quality assurance program that would subject the new curriculum to a periodic review cycle.

COU releases two new Smith reports

The reports of two COU-commissioned studies led by Dr. David Smith, former Principal of Queen's University and former Chair of the government-appointed Advisory Panel on Future Directions for Postsecondary Education, were recently released.

"How will I know if there is quality?" examines quality indicators and quality enhancement in universities and its companion report *"Will there be enough excellent profs?"* examines prospective demand and supply conditions for faculty over the next decade.

Both reports are complementary to the 1999 report by PricewaterhouseCoopers for COU entitled *"Will there be room for me?"* which examined the expected large increase in student demand for university education in Ontario. For a copy of the reports, contact (416) 979-2165 ext. 236, e-mail pub_aff@cou.on.ca or visit the COU web site (www.cou.on.ca).

Chancellors and high-tech CEOs voice support of the liberal arts

The chancellors of Ontario universities gathered at York University's Glendon campus to share their views and experiences, reflect on common concerns, and express pride in the institutions of

which they are the titular heads and confidence in the administrations that run them. They also discussed future opportunities for Ontario, and the challenges that these opportunities present.

The chancellors – distinguished professionals from wide-ranging backgrounds – stressed that the liberal arts and sciences must continue to be a seminal part of Ontario's higher education. They cited a number of recent studies that have clearly underlined that a well-rounded, general education is as valuable to future employability as technical or technological training.

Leaders of some of Canada's major high-technology companies also lent their voice in support: "We stand with the chancellors of Ontario universities, who recently stated that funding 'must permit universities to manage enrolment demand and maintain a diverse and forward-looking curriculum.'" The presidents and CEOs noted that, while they have a need for technology graduates, they have "an equally strong need for those who can work in tandem with technical specialists, helping create and manage the corporate environment." This diverse group recognizes the necessity for a balanced approach to education and readily acknowledges that, in order for their businesses to prosper, "we need creative thinkers at all levels of the enterprise."

Dianne Cunningham, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, stated businesses "need people who know how to communicate, to sell, to relate, to work as part of a team. Those are going to come from the arts, which have always been our universities' strength."

Board Chairs meet with Minister

Dianne Cunningham, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, invited the Chairs of the Boards of Governors of Ontario's universities and the President of COU to attend a meeting on April 18, 2000, to strengthen the collaborative working relations between universities and the Ministry. Among the items discussed were operating grants; tuition fee policy and performance-based funding. Board Chairs found the meeting useful and responded positively to the Minister's suggestion that further meetings be arranged.

OUAC prepares for the anticipated double cohort

OUAC will face the challenge of the heightened demands of the application processing one year before the anticipated double cohort of high school graduates begin arriving on university campuses. As early as the 2001-2002 cycle, the Centre expects that not only will the number of applicants expand but also the number of multiple applications to institutions or programs, in light of the increased competition for university admission.

Permitting applicants to amend their program selections over the web will reduce some of the anticipated increased workload, but the task ahead remains daunting. However, Executive Director Greg Marcotte is confident that, with the careful planning currently underway, the Centre will be able to maintain a high level of efficiency in its operations regardless of the increase in the number of applications.

Electronic transcript continues to evolve

OUAC's electronic transcript system has grown significantly in the past year. With this highly automated system, applicants indicate their university student reference number on the application form. OUAC then collects their academic transcripts electronically and routes them by computer to the universities noted on each applicant's form. Most of Ontario universities are participating because the efficiencies are substantial, virtually eliminating the costs and numerous steps associated with preparing and mailing hard-copy transcripts. Moreover, some have also incorporated programming that automatically calculates admission averages from the electronic data. For students, this process, which uses the international EDI data standard, ensures the

speedy and accurate transfer of their complete academic information.

1999-2000 annual publications now updated

The Council of Ontario Universities has updated two annual publications:

- *Facts & Figures 1999*: a compendium of statistics on Ontario universities; and
- *Ontario Universities – 1999 Resource Document*: a comprehensive review of statistics and trends relevant to Ontario universities across a range of policy areas.